

a young student who said, "You know, this racial deal, it's basically a problem for older people, you know, people in their thirties and forties and fifties." [Laughter] And he got a lot of laughs out of it, but that may well be true. One thing is certainly true: Those of you in this audience who are students in this university, or even younger, will live the vast majority of your lives in a new century. Your children will have no direct experience with the things that have consumed the lives of all of us who are 50 or older. And in a profound way, whether we can come together across all the racial, religious, ethnic, and other lines that divide us, celebrating our diversity, being glad about it, being happy—we're a more interesting country because we are so different from one another—but still saying there are things that bind us together that are more important, that we can preserve our country as one America in the 21st century as a beacon of hope and freedom and opportunity, that will affect your lives far more profoundly than many of the other things that may grab the headlines today or tomorrow or the next day.

So again I say, I hope you will continue the spirit and the dialog manifest in this town meeting today permanently, because we will always benefit from understanding one another, from knowing more about one another, and from feeling like we can be honest with one another when we're mad or if we have an honest disagreement or we don't think we're being treated fairly. And if we do it, then the chances are very high that we will be one America and that we will be a stunning rebuke to all those countries that have tragically taken the lives and the fortunes and the futures away from their children because they could not bridge their racial, their ethnic, their religious divides. That is not our America, and it never will be if people like you will act on what you saw and felt today.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. in the James A. Rhodes Arena at the University of Akron. In his remarks, he referred to Derwin (Dee) Hammonds, president, associated student government, University of Akron; Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic of Akron; and Summit County Executive Tim Davis.

Remarks at a Democratic Party Reception in Chicago, Illinois December 3, 1997

Thank you. Thank you for being here, and thank you for being in such good spirits. I want to begin by saying a very special word of appreciation to Gary LaPaille for 8 years of leadership of the Illinois Democratic Party, during which time, among other things, the State of Illinois voted by large margins, twice, for Bill Clinton and Al Gore. We are very grateful for Gary and for all of you.

I want to thank Senator Dick Durbin for many things, but especially I want to thank him for his leadership in the fight to protect our children from their illegal and often deadly exposure to tobacco. We are going to win that fight next year, thanks to Dick Durbin. And we thank him for that.

And I want to thank Senator Carol Moseley-Braun for many things, but I want you to remember when we approach this election how much difference a vote can make. There were

no votes to spare in 1993 when the economic future of our country hung in the balance. Don't forget what it was like when I was elected in 1992 and why I was elected: 20 years of stagnant wages, a long recession, despair that we had any kind of plan for dealing with the global economy. And when I presented my economic plan, I said, "Look, the first thing we've got to do is get the deficit down. But we can't cut education or health care or investment in the environment. And by the way, we ought to give a tax cut to the lowest income working people with families." And we did. And when I presented my plan, the members of the other party said it would be an end to the world; we'd have a terrible recession; everything was horrible. We passed it by one vote. If Carol Moseley-Braun hadn't been representing Illinois in the Senate, I doubt very seriously that we would be able to say, today, after 5 years, we've

got the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, 13.5 million new jobs, and the strongest American economy in a generation. You have a lot of reasons to reelect Carol Moseley-Braun to the United States Senate.

And then in 1994, I asked repeatedly, for 3 years, the police officers of this country and the prosecutors and the community leaders who work with young people, what kind of crime bill do we need to bring the crime rate down in America again? And keep in mind, when I ran for office in '92, if you had told the American people that we'd have 5 years of declining crime, people would have said, "Yeah, and I'd like to sell you the Brooklyn Bridge." No one would have believed it. But we know there were places in America where the crime rate was already going down. And so I presented to the Congress a crime bill to put 100,000 police on the street, the Brady bill to keep guns out of the hands of people with crime or mental health problems that should disqualify them, an assault weapons ban to keep guns that intended to kill people out of the hands of young people and gangs on the streets, and preventive funds to keep our kids out of trouble. And the other side said, oh, this was the end of the world; why, the crime would go up, and we were going to take guns away from law-abiding citizens. It was the awfulest squalling you ever heard. And we barely broke the filibuster in the Senate. And if Carol Moseley-Braun hadn't been representing Illinois in the Senate, we might not have 5 years of declining crime in the United States of America. That's a good reason to reelect her.

And tomorrow, what about tomorrow? All elections are about the future. Arguably, if she did a good job, that's what you paid her to do. What about tomorrow? We have other challenges. Yes, our Democratic Party has led this country in getting the best economy in a generation, the lowest crime rate in 24 years, the biggest drop in welfare in history, while protecting the children of people on welfare with health care and nutrition and child care and support for people to go into the workplace. Yes, I'm proud of that. What about tomorrow? Tomorrow we have to give a commitment to educational excellence to every child in this country, and we have to have more cities doing what Chicago has done to overhaul their school system and stand for high standards.

I presented a plan last year in the State of the Union Address to do what Carol Moseley-Braun first asked me to do, to try to provide some national help to the crumbling school buildings of this country. I was in Philadelphia the other day; the average school is 65 years old. I was in Akron today at one of our race townhall meetings; three different people said, please give us some help to make our schools places that our kids can be proud of, where learning can occur. We're going to get that done if Carol Moseley-Braun from Illinois is re-elected, so the message is sent to the American Congress that the American people want education to be our top national domestic priority. So I want you to help her.

And finally let me say, I owe a special debt of gratitude to the people of Illinois. When I started running for President, people said to me when I picked Al Gore in the summer of '92—one of my better decisions, I might add—when I picked Al Gore, I remember before—the first time we talked, I was the fifth best-known candidate in New Hampshire. Nobody knew who I was. And he and I met at the Tennessee Governor's mansion once. And this was before—much before I had offered him—nobody thought I was going to be the nominee, so I couldn't ask him to run with me. And he said, "You know, I ran for President 4 years ago, and I had a problem. I did real well in the South, and I had no place to go. How are you going to be nominated?" And I said, "I have a one-word answer: Illinois." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Because Hillary is from Chicago and half the other people who live there were born in Arkansas, and I am going to win Illinois."

And you heard Gary talking about it—December of '91, or October of '91, I appeared before the Democratic chairs who were here. David Wilhelm from Chicago became my campaign manager, went to become chairman of our party. Many people from Illinois have come in and out of our administration. A lot of them are here today—Minyon Moore from Chicago, here with me today, who set up our race townhall meeting in Akron; and of course, Secretary Daley, our Secretary of Commerce, who is doing a terrific job; and Rahm Emanuel and my old friends Kevin O'Keefe and Avis LaVelle and others who were in the administration who are here.

Illinois has been very special to me. What Chicago did for Hillary on her 50th birthday almost made her forget her age. [Laughter] It was an act of uncommon kindness and generosity. And I want you to know that we're looking to you; we're looking to you.

Illinois is better than it was 5 years ago. And all the fights we had and all the compromise we made that were principled reflected the values, the ideas, and the future of the Democratic Party. When we passed this balanced budget last year, which party do you think it was that was arguing the hardest to target our tax cuts to education and kids, rather than to those of us who were doing well already? When we passed that balanced budget last year, we guaranteed a \$1,500-a-year—a year—tax credit for the first 2 years of college, tax deductions for the last 2 years of college, for graduate school, and for working people that have to go back and get further training. We opened the doors of college to all Americans, the biggest increase since the GI bill 50 years ago. Who do you think was doing that? It was the Democrats that were fighting for that, and I'm proud of that. When we agreed over the next few years to add 5 million more children in working families to the ranks of those with health insurance, who was really fighting for that? Our Democratic Party was fighting for that.

So I say to you, you've got most of the Democratic candidates for Governor here. I know there's a lot of them, but you've got to be patient with them. I had that job for 12 years; that's a good job. [Laughter] I don't blame them

for running. It's a good job. And it's more important than ever before, for the Governors shape how we cover children and health insurance; the Governors shape how we implement welfare reform; the Governors shape how we pursue the economic and educational initiatives that I'm trying to lead the country toward. It's a big deal. So I want you to be for whomever you choose, but when it's over, unite behind the one who wins and give Illinois a Democratic Governor in this next election year.

Lastly, let me say, I know that I will not be on the ballot again, but I will be working for our party and our candidates and, more importantly, for our ideas and our values, till the last minute of the last day of my Presidency and beyond. We have done a lot in the last 5 years, but we have 3 years more to go, and I believe we can get more done in the next 3 years than we have in the last 5 if we will stay together, walk hand in hand, remember who sent us there, and keep working to make America what it ought to be, a land of opportunity for every single citizen.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:35 p.m. in Festival Hall at Navy Pier at a combined Illinois State Democratic Party and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee reception. In his remarks, he referred to Kevin O'Keefe, former Deputy Assistant to the President; and Avis LaVelle, former Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services (Public Affairs).

Remarks to the Democratic Business Council in Chicago

December 3, 1997

Thank you very much. Lew, that was so nice I felt almost like it was a eulogy. [Laughter] I started to say, I'm not done yet; I'm not done yet.

I want to thank Lew and Susan for their role in this tonight. And thank you, Phil, and thanks to all of the people here at this table and all the rest of you who helped to put together this wonderfully successful evening for our party.

Lew and Susan, we go back a long time in this, and I can't help but—just listening to them reminisce, I'd like to say something I said when Gary LaPaille and I were down at the other event with Senator Moseley-Braun and Senator Durbin, and I don't know if Congressmen Davis and Rush are here, but they were with us at the other event.

I'll never forget the first conversation I had with Al Gore after I became a candidate for President. Now, this was when I was the fifth-